

## A STONE IMPLEMENT FROM NORTH-EAST QUEENSLAND.

GEORGE MACK.

Queensland Museum.

A third example of an uncommon Aboriginal stone implement was added to the collections of the Queensland Museum in 1948 by Mr. C. E. Mittelheuser. The specimen was turned up by the plough in land that was being prepared for an extension of sugar cane growing at Pawngilly, near Babinda, north-east Queensland. It would appear to be the tenth of its kind known in Australian collections.

The implement is made from a highly metamorphosed volcanic rock. It is 130 mm. high, and the base measures 121 mm. in length by 13 mm. in thickness. The grip is fashioned at a slight angle to the base which is both polished and striated. The prominent marks on the hand-grip (Figure 1) were caused by the plough.

This type of implement was first described by Casey (1936) who referred to four examples: two in the National Museum, Melbourne, one in the Australian Museum, Sydney, and one in the Queensland Museum, Brisbane. McCarthy (1944) has since recorded a total of three for the Australian Museum, and there are now three in the Queensland Museum.

Casey stated that the use to which these artefacts were put was unknown, but he quoted from an old label in the Queensland Museum which described them as "whetstones," used by the Aborigines to sharpen tomahawks and to strip netted fibre. As a reason for the fashioning of such a finely made tool, this explanation is not convincing. Much more likely is the explanation given by Kennedy (1949) when he recorded two of these specialised implements in his own collection. He stated that an old resident of north-east Queensland informed him that the Aborigines used them especially for smoothing or finishing their large wooden implements, such as the large swords which were characteristic of the district. With wet sand as an abrasive, the stone implement was moved over the surface of the wood until the required degree of smoothness was attained. This is a convincing explanation, and it affords an equally convincing explanation of the polished and striated base of the stone implement. It is noteworthy that the large swords mentioned, which were made from hardwood, as well as large shields of softwood, and these uncommon stone implements have all been obtained only in the Cairns-Cardwell rain forest area of north-east Queensland.

It has been stated by McCarthy that examples of this implement were presented by Mr. G. Kimlin to the Museums in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. This is incorrect. Following are the localities and names of donors of these artefacts in the Queensland Museum :—

Johnstone River, North-east Queensland. Presented by H. Tryon, 2-12-1897.

Midgenoo, Tully River, North-east Queensland. Presented by A. B. Shardon, 7-4-1936.

Pawngilly, near Babinda, North-east Queensland. Presented by C. E. Mittelheuser, 31-10-1948.

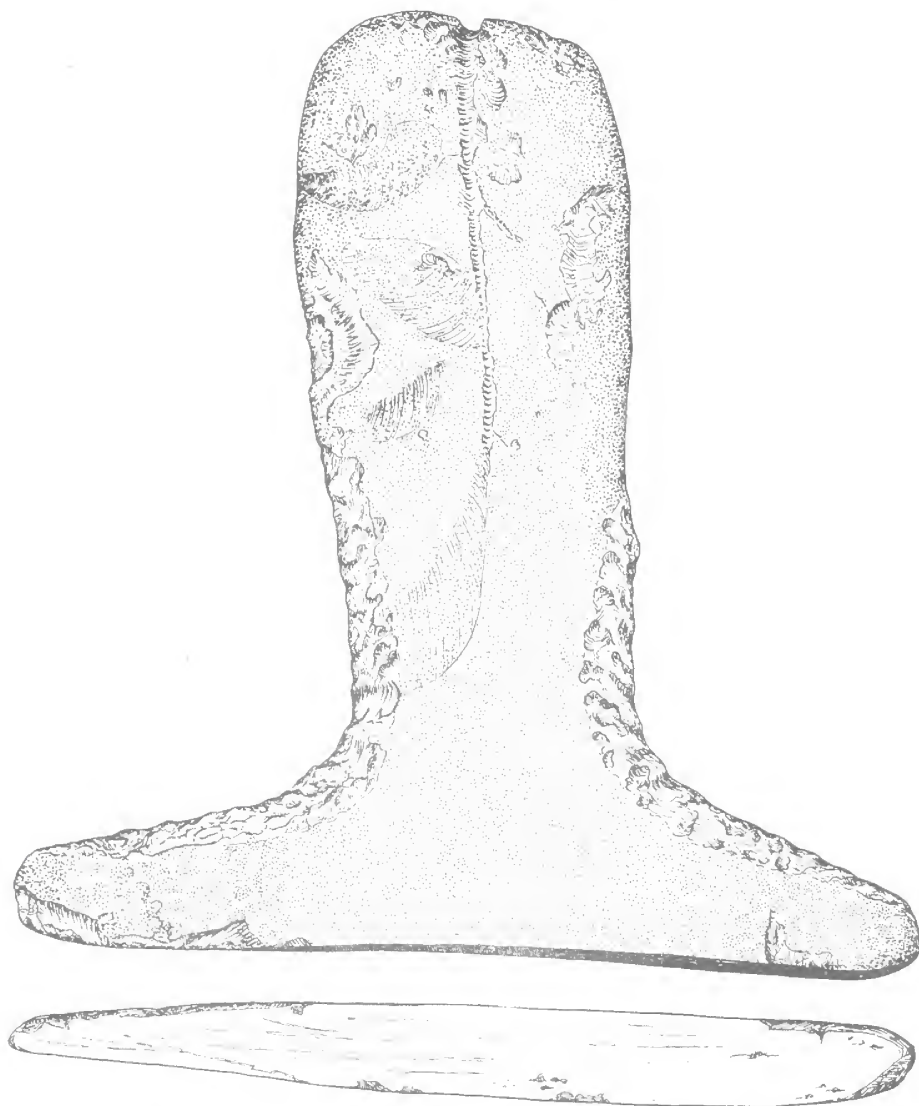


Figure 1. Stone Implement from Pawngilly, North-east Queensland.

LITERATURE CITED.

- Casey, D. A., 1936. Ethnological Notes. *Mem. Nat Mus. Vict.*, No. 9, pp. 90-97.  
McCarthy, F. D., 1944. Some unusual Stone Artefacts from Australia and New Guinea. *Rec. Aust. Mus.*, 21, pp. 264-266.  
Kennedy, K., 1949. Two Stone Artefacts from North Queensland. *North Qld. Nat.*, 16, p. 25.

A. H. TUCKER, Government Printer, Brisbane.